

REGULAR MEETING OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL /
2015 BUDGET HEARINGS
August 19, 2014

The Jasper County Council met this date at 7:00 P.M. C.S.T. in the Commissioners' Room, Suite 202, of the Jasper County Courthouse located at 115 West Washington Street, Rensselaer, Indiana, with the following members present: Rein O. Bontreger, H. Dan Stalbaum, Ronald G. Sipkema, Gerrit H. DeVries, John T. Price, Stephen R. Jordan and Andrew Andree. Also present was the Auditor of Jasper County, Kimberly K. Grow and Deputy Auditor, Donna J. Horner. Mr. Bontreger called the meeting to order and those present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Stalbaum.

MINUTES: Mr. DeVries requested that a clarification be made in regards to the tax abatements. Each motion currently reads that the Council approved the personal property and real estate abatements. These tax abatements are not new; therefore, Mr. DeVries suggested that the motion read that the Council approved the "continuation of" the abatements. Mr. Price suggested that it also be mentioned that they are in compliance with the terms of the abatement. Mr. Price made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on July 22 with the suggested changes. Mr. Stalbaum seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS: No additional appropriation requests were submitted for the August meeting.

TRANSFERS: No transfer requests were submitted for the August meeting.

BZA APPOINTMENT: The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) is in need of a replacement for a current member who would no longer like to serve on the board due to scheduling conflicts. The following names were submitted as possible replacements: Scott Walstra submitted by Mr. Sipkema; Brian Kaluf submitted by Mr. Andree; and Butch Jeffries submitted by Mr. Stalbaum. In response to a question from Mr. Bontreger, Mr. Sipkema replied that Mr. Walstra is in the landscaping business. Mr. Andree stated that Mr. Kaluf owns a general contracting business with his father. Mr. Stalbaum stated that Mr. Jeffries had contacted him in regards to the open position. Mr. Jeffries is retired and is the Walker Township Trustee. Mr. DeVries questioned if it would be a conflict for Mr. Jeffries? Mr. Price replied that he does not believe that an elected official can serve on the BZA. Attorney Monfort replied, "that is correct". Mr. Sipkema made a motion to nominate Scott Walstra. Mr. Andree nominated Brian Kaluf. Mr. Jordan made a motion to close nominations. After a vote of 2-4, Mr. Kaluf was appointed to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Let the record show that Mr. Sipkema and Mr. Jordan voted in favor of Scott Walstra. Mr. Stalbaum, Mr. Price, Mr. DeVries, and Mr. Andree voted in favor of Brian Kaluf.

LOCAL OPTION INCOME TAX / ORDINANCE: A public hearing was held to discuss Local Option Income Tax #1 (LOIT) – Growth Factor Levy. Mr. Bontreger stated that last year the Council chose to attach the growth factor rate to the property tax as opposed to the income tax. In response to a question from Mr. Bontreger, Auditor Grow stated that the rate is 2.7. Mr. DeVries stated that he feels the Council did a wonderful thing last year for the citizens to at least lower the total county income tax from what it had been to now below 3%. It actually involved two steps – we chose to reduce the Jail Special CAGIT by .0010% and we also reduced the LOIT B by .0005%. That total brought it down to below 3%; however, we still remain the second highest in the State. Mr. DeVries continued to state that he would like to see it even further reduced if possible but, at the very least, not to see it increase any more. I don't know if there is any room still to actually further reduce the Jail Special CAGIT. Is there a need to even keep it at the same rate that it is? Can it be reduced or can we actually continue to whittle down a little bit of LOIT B to maybe even .009%? Mr. Price stated that he would personally like to see us not impact the income tax. Mr. Stalbaum also expressed that he feels that we need to address it on property taxes. At this time, Mr. Bontreger asked for public comment. Robert Shanks, concerned citizen, stated that, as mentioned, Jasper County has the second highest income tax in the State. It is considerably higher than virtually every other county income tax and I don't think that's a good thing. I think when you are that far out, there is something wrong. On the other hand, our property taxes are amazingly low so I would like to see a better balance between property tax and income tax. Mr. Stalbaum made a motion to approve **Ordinance No. 8-19-14A** imposing the Growth Factor Rate as set by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance for the calendar year of 2015 to be funded by Tax Levy. Mr. Price seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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COUNTY ZONING AND ORDINANCES / ENFORCEMENT: Mr. Price requested that the Council consider having Attorney Monfort look into what would be involved with the enforcement of county zoning and ordinances. After some discussion, the decision was made to place the item on the September agenda.

JAIL SPECIAL CAGIT: Mr. DeVries stated that when we discussed the particular issue of the county income tax last year and where to apply it, we also did make a decision at that time to reduce the Jail Special CAGIT. It that (Jail Special CAGIT) overfunding the needs that we have? Do we have any figures on that? Mr. Bontreger replied that, in talking with the Auditor, we have created some “ripples” that are causing some of these funds to be adjusted and I am concerned that if we tweak it again this year, I don’t know what the results will be. I personally would like to see it settle out for another year before we decide if we’re going to reduce anything else. Any adjustment we make has effects on all of these other line items. Mr. Stalbaum added that it also has effects on the school corporations, the cities and towns and our cap situation. I don’t know if we have enough data yet to really analyze what we did do and how we affected it.

AGRICULTURE THEFTS / SHERIFF: Upon request, Sheriff Risner gave an update on the steps being taken to reduce agriculture thefts. Sheriff Risner reported that they had 15 irrigation wiring thefts in 2011. In 2012, Farm Bureau made a big push for alarms on the irrigation units. No irrigation thefts were reported to the Sheriff’s department in that year. In 2013, there were six (6) reports of thefts. Of those six, five (5) were solved by arrest. So far in 2014, we have had four (4) thefts and two (2) attempted.

2015 BUDGET HEARINGS:

LOIT PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGET / SHERIFF: Sheriff Risner stated that he has requested a 5% raise for his employees. DeMotte Police Department’s Patrol Officers make \$51,000.00 per year which is more than my Chief Deputy makes. Mr. Bontreger asked how DeMotte’s insurance and benefit package compares to the County? Sheriff Risner replied that the last he knew they had an IRA that they paid a lump sum into for them. Mr. Price stated that he would say that it’s comparable. Sheriff Risner stated that the second Drug Interdiction Officer will be added into the LOIT Public Safety budget this year. Mr. DeVries asked Sheriff Risner if he knows how the pay scale compares to the City of Rensselaer and other counties? Sheriff Risner replied that he believes that we are comparable with Rensselaer; however, he cannot answer exactly.

COUNTY GENERAL BUDGET / SHERIFF: A 5% salary increase has been requested. There is no change to the Merit Board pay. Sheriff Risner has requested a full-time secretarial position. Mr. Stalbaum asked if the part-time position would still be needed if the full-time position is approved? Sheriff Risner replied that, if the full-time position were approved, the part-time would be moved to full-time. The part-time position was left within the budget because it will be needed if the full-time is not approved. Through July 31, Civil Process has served 2,152 civil papers and 31 Sheriff’s sales have been held. Each Sheriff’s sale brings in \$200.00 to the county. Money is also collected on court paper service, accident reports and firearm permits. There is a slight increase in part-time requests. Sheriff Risner would like to raise the part-time to the allowable \$16.00/hr. In regards to the police pension, a report is received quarterly from the actuarial and also from the people who are handling our account to let us know what is needed to keep the fund viable under the state statute. The \$258,347.00 is the exact amount that is requested at this time. In regards to the liability insurance, the exact amount is not known. The increase request is due to the fact that the line has been short in the past. The “Court Security Equipment” is for the replacement of items that wear out or break. Sheriff Risner stated that if he has to lose something, this would be something he could lose.

STATEWIDE 911 BUDGET / SHERIFF: Part-time help has been increased by \$1,000.00 to allow for the \$1.00 per hour pay raise for the part-time communications officers. It is anticipated that we will have to do a server upgrade, E911 upgrade, and equipment upgrade within the coming year. A lot will depend on what the State provides for these upgrades. Sheriff Risner stated that we only have one PSAP in the E911 system with two satellite points in DeMotte and Rensselaer.

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JAIL BUDGET / SHERIFF: A 5% increase in salaries has been requested. Four (4) additional correctional officers have been requested. The new Indiana jail requirements that take place November 1 are going to require that we have sufficient personnel on the floor, in the control, and in book-in to handle any emergency situation that arises in the facility. We have been running right around 70 on adult population this summer.

JAIL SPECIAL CAGIT BUDGET: An increase has been requested in the Medical & Hospital line item. On July 1, a \$10.00 co-pay was implemented for the inmates to see the jail nurse, jail doctor, or to have prescription medicine handed out. Our contract with our medical provider is \$93,000.00 per year.

CEDIT COUNTY SHARE / SHERIFF: Within the CEDIT Technology budget, the computer supplies for the Sheriff have been increased from \$5,000.00 to \$8,000.00. The reason for the increase in the Maintenance Agreement line item is due to the addition of an agreement with Havel. Havel is the company that installed all of the new heating and cooling system. Sheriff Risner stated that he would not want to lose the Radio Repair & Maintenance line item; however, if you need to take money from somewhere, this is something I could probably get out of the drug fund. Mr. Price asked, "How much is left in the fund?" Sheriff Risner replied that we have approximately \$500,000.00.

CUMULATIVE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT / SHERIFF: Sheriff Risner stated that they have been paying for most of the equipment needed for the cars out of the drug fund; however, we do not want to lose this line item. Three (3) cars have also been requested from this budget.

PARTNERS FOR DRUG FREE COMMUNITY / SHERIFF: Sheriff Risner explained that this is money that is used to do extra alcohol or drug patrols. The money basically comes from a grant that we apply to through the Partners for a Drug Free Community.

There being no further business, Mr. Jordan made a motion to continue the budget hearings until Monday, August 25 at 8:30 A.M. Mr. Stalbaum seconded and the motion carried.

Rein O. Bontreger, President

ATTEST:

Kimberly K. Grow, Auditor of Jasper County

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